

Directed Reading-Thinking Activity

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What Is It?

Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA) is a teaching strategy that guides students in making predictions about a text and then reading to confirm or refute their predictions. This strategy encourages students to be active and thoughtful readers, enhancing their comprehension.

The following steps outline the DR-TA process.

1. Introduction

- What do you already know about this subject?

2. Predict

- Looking at the title, what do you think the story is about? Why?
- Looking at the pictures, what do you think the story will be about? Why?

3. Prove or Modify Predictions

After reading each section, answer the following:

- What do you think now?
- Can you prove your predictions, or do you need to modify them?
- What do you think will happen next? Why?

4. Reflect

After reading the entire selection, answer the following:

- What did you find in the text to prove your predictions?
- What did you find in the text that caused you to modify your predictions?

Why Is It Important?

Most students require explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies (Tierney 1982).

Good readers make predictions and verify or refute them as they read. They also make adjustments to what they think will come next based on the text. DR-TA is a strategy that explicitly teaches students to good reading habits.

How Can You Make It Happen?

Before using this strategy with students, create a classroom climate in which students are free to state their ideas and share their thinking. This is especially necessary for students who are not

risk-takers. Because these students want to be correct the first time they answer a question, DR-TA can be challenging for them. DR-TA asks students to predict the unknown in a text, and at times students will be incorrect. For some students, you may want to consider having them write their predictions in a [journal](#) rather than posting them on an overhead transparency or the chalkboard. Encourage students not to be intimidated by taking a risk and not to feel pressure to state correct predictions.

As an introductory lesson to DR-TA, select a reading passage, and determine several appropriate stopping points within it for students to make, verify, or modify predictions. Use sticky notes to mark students' copies of the text in advance to prevent students from reading too far ahead. Be cautious not to interrupt the flow of the text too many times, as this will adversely affect comprehension.

When you use this strategy, guide and stimulate students' thinking through the use of questions. Pose open-ended questions, and encourage students to state their predictions, valuing and supporting all ideas. Wait a few seconds after asking a question, to allow students to process the information and form a prediction.

At the beginning of the lesson, write the title of the book or passage on an overhead transparency or the chalkboard. Ask students, "Given this title, what do you think the passage will be about?" Accept and record all predictions on the transparency or chalkboard. Ask students, "Why do you think that?" to encourage them to justify their responses and activate prior knowledge.

Preview the illustrations and/or headings of the passage. Ask students to revise their predictions based on this new information. Make changes to the predictions on the transparency or chalkboard.

Have students read silently. Stop them after the first section of the passage, and lead a class discussion to verify or modify predictions. Ask students to cite the text which caused them to confirm or change a prediction. Ask students, "What in the passage makes you think that? Can you prove it?" Make changes to the predictions on the transparency or chalkboard.

Repeat this process until students have read each section of the passage. Verify or modify the predictions made at the beginning of the lesson.

As students become more comfortable with this process, have each student write predictions in a learning log or on a piece of paper. Then, in small groups, students can discuss their predictions and share their thinking processes. Next ask students to write summary statements about how their predictions compared to the passage.

Using DR-TA in a heterogeneous group can be a challenge due to the range of reading levels that may be present. In this case, you may want to select two passages on the same topic – one higher-level and one lower-level. Divide the class into groups to read the text that is appropriate for them. These groups should share information as described in the previous paragraph.

If your students are not yet readers, the strategy is referred to as Directed Listening-Thinking Activity (DL-TA) and proceeds the same way, except you read the text to the class. To use DL-TA for challenged readers, have a taped version of the passage available. Listening to text read aloud provides challenged readers with opportunities to attend to and comprehend material that they would be unable to read for themselves (Gillet and Temple 1994).

How Can You Stretch Students' Thinking?

The more complex the reading passage, the more interpretation and analysis students will need to do to verify or modify predictions. Be aware of the reading levels of each student, and be prepared to provide appropriate questions, prompts, and support as needed.

Older students may be able to use a [printed guide for DR-TA](#) to run their own [literature](#) discussion groups. Monitor these groups to ensure all students are participating and the discussion leads students to a greater understanding of the text.

When Can You Use It?

Reading/English

Use the DR-TA strategy when introducing new picture books to young students or new chapter books to older students. With young students, you may want to [read the book aloud](#), making predictions as a class or a group, and reading to confirm the predictions. With chapter books, have students make predictions at the start of each chapter so that their predictions draw from the chapters they have already read. For the first chapter, you can have students make predictions based on other books they have read by the same author or other books they have read in the same genre.

Writing

After students read a passage using the DR-TA strategy, have them write a summary of their initial prediction and why it was correct or needed to be modified. Students can justify their ideas based on evidence from the text.

Math

Use the DR-TA strategy when solving word problems. Have students predict the math processes ([addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division](#)) or information (a dozen = 12) that might be needed to solve the problem based on the title, illustrations, and key words. Have students discuss the validity of their predictions prior to solving the word problem.

Social Studies

DR-TA can be useful to students who are reading to gain information from expository text. Ask students to preview a chapter of the social studies textbook, and to use the headings, bold

vocabulary, [maps](#), and charts to make predictions. As students read the chapter, have them verify or modify their predictions. At the end of the chapter, discuss predictions with them. Have students summarize the information they learned in a study guide.

Science

DR-TA can be useful to students who are reading to gain information from a research article. Ask students to preview a research article on a popular topic that might appeal to them. Have students use the title, headings, vocabulary, and charts, as well as their own prior knowledge to make predictions. As students read the article, have them verify or modify their predictions, and draw conclusions. Then, ask students to write [journal entries](#) based on their predictions and the text.